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Saucedo

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(54) **SURFBOARD SEPARATING DEVICE**

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150/154; 150/52 R

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206/522, 523; 150/154, 52 R; 224/901
See application file for complete search history.

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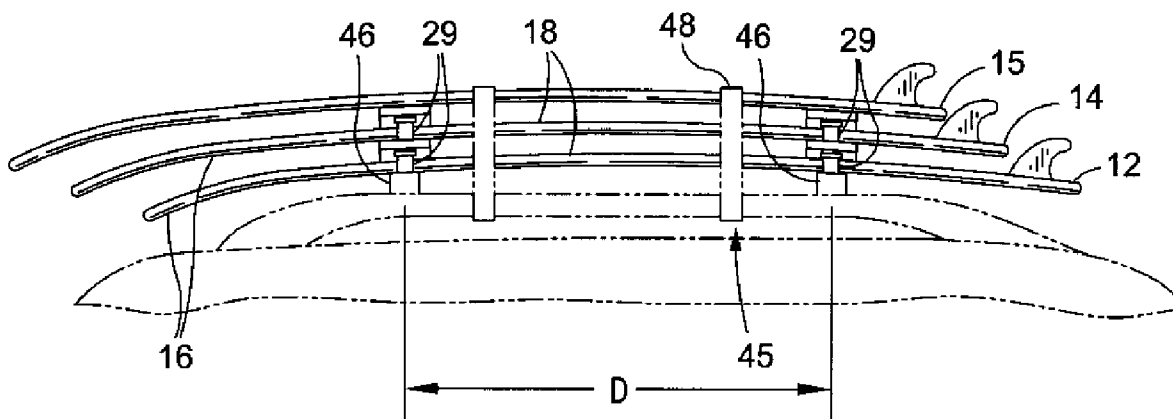
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A surfboard separator for allowing a user to stack two surfboards on top of each other during the transport of the surfboards to a prescribed destination. The separator is operative to separate a first surfboard from a second surfboard stacked thereon, and to further create a padded interface therebetween. The separator is connectable to the first surfboard and comprises an elongate strap having opposed first and second ends. The separator further comprises at least one pad connected to the strap. The pad is disposed against a lower surface of the first surfboard when the separator is connected to the first surfboard. The separator also includes an attachment assembly connected to the strap. The attachment assembly comprises first and second connectors which are releasably attachable to each other to facilitate the engagement of the separator to the first surfboard.

20 Claims, 2 Drawing Sheets



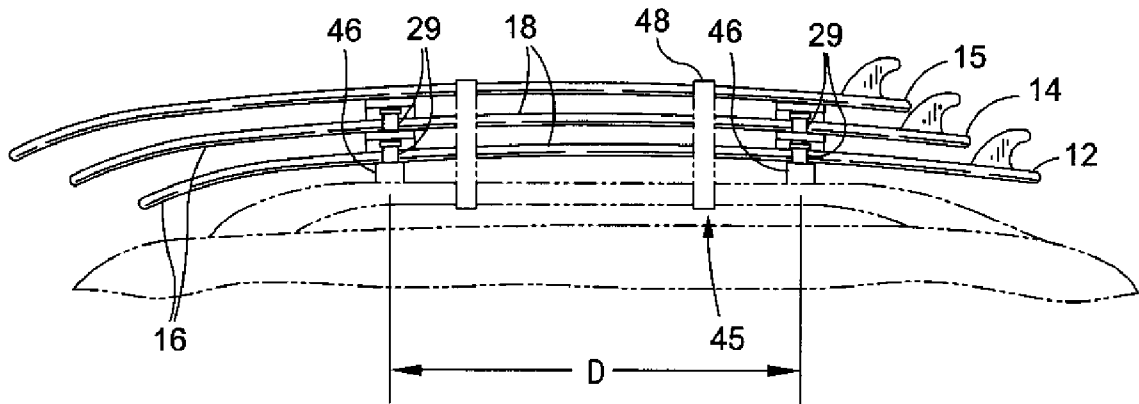


Fig. 1

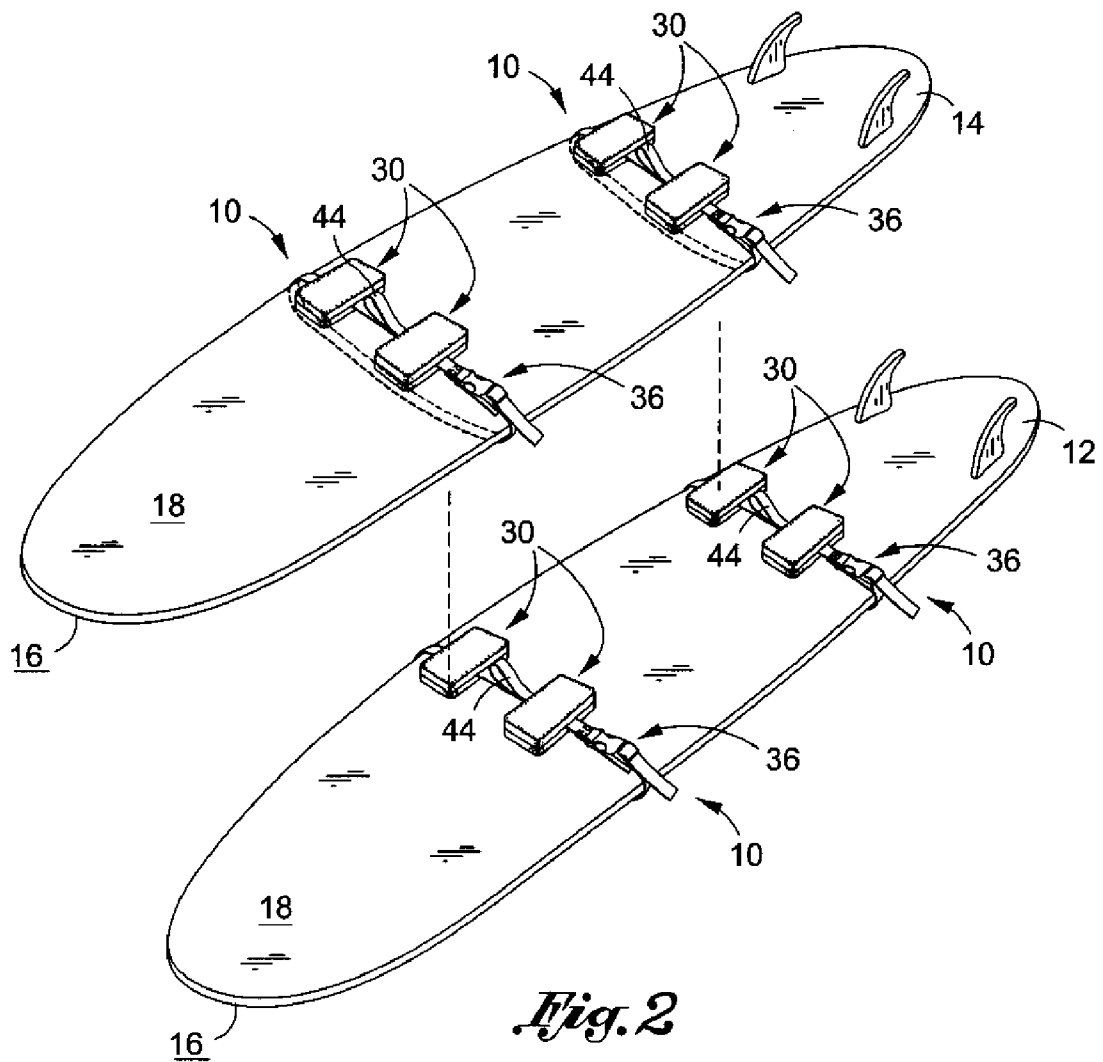


Fig. 2

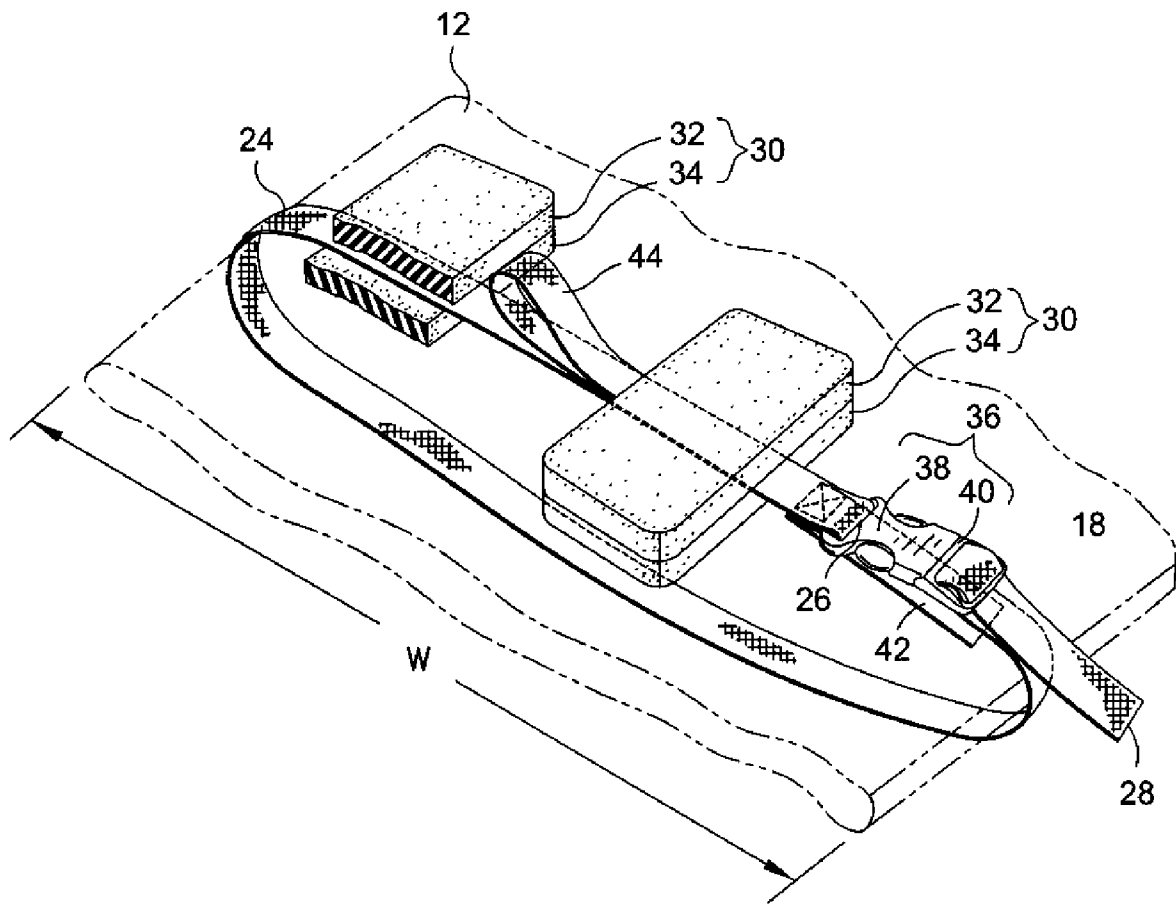


Fig. 3

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SURFBOARD SEPARATING DEVICECROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED
APPLICATIONS

(Not Applicable)

STATEMENT RE: FEDERALLY SPONSORED
RESEARCH/DEVELOPMENT

(Not Applicable)

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to storage devices and more particularly, to a surfboard separator which is adapted to safeguard surfboards during the transport thereof in a stacked arrangement.

2. Description of the Related Art

It is well known that different surfboards offer different surfing experiences. For instance, shorter surfboards generally enable more maneuverability while surfing, while longer boards may be better suited for simply catching waves. Therefore, surfers often want to bring at least two surfboards with them to their surfing destination so they have the option of selecting a surfboard depending on the surf conditions at a particular destination. Surfers may also bring a backup surfboard in the event that their primary surfboard sustains damage.

Although it is desirable to have multiple surfboards available at a surfing spot, the transport more than one surfboard to a particular destination is often a difficult process for many surfers. Many surfboards are too long to fit into an average sized vehicle. Therefore, many surfers install roof racks on top of their vehicle for surfboard transport. Although a roof rack provides a means for transporting a surfboard, complications may arise if the surfer decides to bring two surfboards. Many racks are not wide enough to lay the surfboards side-by-side. Therefore, surfers have resorted to stacking their surfboards on top of one another.

Simply stacking one surfboard on top of the other is undesirable as it is likely to cause damage to each of the surfboards. In particular, the surfboards bump and rub against each other, thereby causing scratches and gouges thereon. Such scratches and gouges diminish the aesthetic quality of the surfboard; however, they may also affect the performance of the surfboard. They may slow down a surfboard, making paddling and turning more difficult. Consequently, surfers have placed various items including towels and wetsuits between their surfboards for protection.

Although towels and wetsuits may offer some protection, there are many disadvantages to employing such items to protect surfboards during transport. One disadvantage is that the towel or wetsuit may not be securely fastened to the surfboard. Consequently, it may slip out during transport, leaving nothing between the two surfboards. Another disadvantage is that it may take a considerable amount of time to situate the wetsuit or towel between the surfboards to minimize the likelihood that it may slip out during transport. A further drawback is that the towel or wetsuit may sustain damage during the trip. For instance, wind may rip or tear the towel or wetsuit.

As is apparent from the foregoing, there exists a need in the art for a surfboard separator and a method of using the same to enable a surfer to stack one surfboard on top of another

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during transport to a surfing destination. The present invention address this particular need, as will be discussed in more detail below.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

According to an aspect of the present invention, there is provided a surfboard separator for allowing a user to stack two surfboards on top of each other during the transport of the surfboards to a prescribed destination. The surfboard separator is operative to separate a first surfboard from a second surfboard stacked thereon, and to further create a padded interface therebetween. Both the first and second surfboards define opposed upper and lower surfaces. The surfboard separator is connectable to the first surfboard and comprises an elongate strap having opposed first and second ends. The separator further comprises at least one pad connected to the strap. The pad is disposed against the lower surface of the first surfboard when the separator is connected to the first surfboard. The separator also includes an attachment assembly connected to the strap. The attachment assembly comprises a first connector permanently attached to the first end of the strap and a second connector adjustably attached to the strap in relative close proximity to the second end thereof. The first and second connectors of the attachment assembly are releasably attachable to each other to facilitate the engagement of the separator to the first surfboard. The position of the second connector upon the strap is selectively adjustable to enable a user to fit the strap onto a variety of surfboards that vary in width. The strap may be secured to the first surfboard by cinching the strap about the width of the first surfboard.

The surfboard separator may include an attachment assembly guard connected to the strap. The attachment assembly guard is oriented on the strap so as to be disposed between the interconnected first and second connectors of the attachment assembly and the first surfboard to prevent the attachment assembly from rubbing against or scratching the surface of the first surfboard.

The surfboard separator may additionally include a loop defined by a prescribed portion of the strap. The loop aids a user in cinching the strap around the first surfboard. The user inserts a thumb or other finger from one hand into the loop, while at the same time pulling the second end of the strap with the other hand. The force exerted against the strap by the thumb within the loop resists the undesirable rotation of the separator relative to the surfboard which could otherwise occur when the second end of the strap is pulled to facilitate the tightening or cinching of the strap about the first surfboard. Typically, two separators constructed in accordance with the present invention will be cooperatively engaged to the first surfboard in spaced relation to each other. Thereafter, a second surfboard may be stacked upon the first surfboard, and more particularly upon the pads of the separators. If a third surfboard is to be included in the stack, a pair of the separators of the present invention may be cooperatively engaged to the second surfboard in the same manner as the first surfboard.

According to another aspect of the present invention, there is provided of method of using the surfboard separator to stack surfboards on top of a vehicle. The vehicle includes a roof rack having a pair of brackets separated by a first distance. The method includes the initial step of providing a pair of surfboard separators and securing the separators to the first surfboard. The separators are secured to the first surfboard such that the pad(s) of each separator is/are disposed on the lower surface of the first surfboard. The surfboard separators are preferably spaced from each other on the first surfboard by

a distance which is roughly equal to the first distance between the roof rack brackets. The first surfboard is then placed on the roof rack such that the lower surface is upwardly facing. The second surfboard is subsequently placed on top of the first surfboard such that the lower surface of the second surfboard is also upwardly facing, the upper surface of the second surfboard thus being directly abutted against the pad(s) of each of the separators engaged to the lower first surfboard in the stack. The method may additionally include the step of securing the stacked first and second surfboard to the roof rack. The surfboards may be secured to the roof rack using a bungee cord, rope or similar securing devices.

The surfboard separator of the present invention provides a quick and effective means of separating two surfboards so they are safely transported to a surfing destination. The separation and padded interface provided by the surfboard separator prevents the two surfboards from bumping or scratching each other. A rough surface may inhibit the performance of the surfboard. Therefore, the present invention aims at ensuring that the two surfboards arrive at the surfing destination in peak riding condition.

The present invention is best understood by reference to the following detailed description when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

These and other features and advantages of the various embodiments disclosed herein will be better understood with respect to the following description and drawings in which like numbers refer to like parts throughout and in which:

FIG. 1 is a side elevational view of three surfboards stacked on top of a vehicular roof rack wherein each adjacent pair of the surfboards is separated by at least one surfboard separator constructed in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a top exploded view of the lower two surfboards of the stack shown in FIG. 1, each surfboard having a pair of the surfboards separators of the present invention attached thereto; and

FIG. 3 is a top perspective view of one of the surfboard separators shown in FIGS. 1 and 2 as operatively connected to one of the stacked surfboards.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring now to the drawings wherein the showings are for purposes of illustrating a preferred embodiment of the present invention only, and not for purposes of limiting the same, FIGS. 1-3 depict a surfboard separator 10 constructed in accordance with the present invention. It is contemplated that the surfboard separator 10 may be used to stack two, three, or more surfboards on top of each other. FIG. 1 depicts a stack wherein a first surfboard 12 includes a pair of the separators 10 operatively coupled thereto, the first surfboard 12 having a second surfboard 14 stacked thereon. The second surfboard 14 also has a pair of the separators 10 of the present invention operatively connected thereto. A third surfboard 15 is also depicted in FIG. 1 as being stacked upon the second surfboard 14. However, in the description below, the separator 10 will be described only in terms of its use in stacking the second surfboard 14 upon the first surfboard 12. However, those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that the discussion regarding the stacking of the first and second surfboards 12, 14 on each other through the use of the separator 10 is also applicable to the stacking of the third surfboard 15 upon the second surfboard 14 in the event the third surfboard

15 is included in the stack. The same discussion would also be applicable to the stacking of a fourth surfboard upon the third surfboard 15, etc.

Both of the first and second surfboards 12, 14 define opposed upper and lower surfaces 16, 18. The lower surface 18 of each of the surfboards 12, 14 is that surface including the fin(s) disposed thereon as shown in FIGS. 1 and 2. It is contemplated that in using the separator 10 of the present invention to facilitate the stacking of the second surfboard 14 upon the first surfboard 12, a pair of the separators 10 will be cooperatively engaged to the lower first surfboard 12 of the stack in spaced relation to each other in the manner shown in FIGS. 1 and 2. The structural and functional attributes of each separator 10 of the pair cooperatively engaged to the first surfboard 12 of the stack will also be described below.

Each surfboard separator 10 of the pair comprises an elongate, flexible strap 24 which defines a first end 26 and an opposed second end 28. The strap 24 is preferably fabricated from strong, durable material capable of withstanding the wear and tear associated with the contemplated use of the separators 10. For example, the strap 24 may be fabricated of woven nylon, though other similar materials known by those of ordinary skill in the art may also be employed in the fabrication thereof.

In addition to the strap 24, each separator 10 comprises at least one, and preferably a pair of generally rectangular pads 30 which are disposed on the strap 24 in spaced relation to each other. As best shown in FIG. 3, each pad 30 is preferably comprised of first and second pad sections 32, 34 which are rigidly attached to each other. In one embodiment of the present invention, each pad 30 is attached to the strap by securing the first and second pad sections 32, 34 to each other subsequent to the extension of a prescribed portion of the strap 24 therebetween. In each pad 30, the first and second pad sections 32, 34 are preferably secured to each other through the use of a suitable adhesive, though differing attachment methods are contemplated to be within the spirit and scope of the present invention. The strap 24 is not adhesively secured to either of the first and second sections 32, 34 of each of the pads 30. As a result, each of the pads 30 is adjustably positionable along the strap 24 to allow for variations in the spacing therebetween for purposes of accommodating surfboards of differing widths.

Though each pad 30 is preferably slidably connected to the strap 24, those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that each pad 30 may alternatively be rigidly attached to the strap 24 so as to be maintained in one prescribed location thereon. Additionally, though each pad 30 is preferably fabricated from the first and second pad sections 32, 34 secured to each other in the aforementioned manner, it is further contemplated that each pad 30 may comprise a unitary structure which has a suitable slot or opening formed therein to allow for the advancement of the strap 24 therethrough. In addition, though each pad 30 as shown in FIGS. 2 and 3 has a generally quadrangular (e.g., rectangular) configuration, those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that other shapes and sizes for the pads 30 are contemplated to be within the spirit and scope of the present invention. In this regard, the pads 30 may vary in size, provided that they provide a sufficient level of separation between the stacked surfboards 12, 14 as needed to prevent damage thereto. Each pad 30 is also preferably constructed of a durable, foam-like material that is capable of supporting the weight of the second surfboard 14 and further has resilient properties to allow the pads 30 to act as shock absorbers during the transport of the stacked first and second surfboards 12, 14.

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Each separator **10** of the present invention further comprises an attachment assembly **36** which is connected to the strap **24**. As is best shown FIG. **3**, the attachment assembly **36** comprises a female connector **38** which is permanently attached to the first end **26** of the strap **24**. In addition to the female connector **38**, the attachment assembly **36** comprises a male connector **40** which is adjustably mounted to the strap **24** in relative close proximity to the second end **28** thereof. The male and female connectors **40**, **38** are releasably attachable to each other in the manner shown in FIGS. **2** and **3**. Those of ordinary skill in the art that alternative types of connectors other than for the male and female connectors **40**, **38** shown in FIGS. **2** and **3** are contemplated to be within the spirit and scope of the present invention. In the separator **10**, the position of the male connector **40** upon the strap **24** may be selectively varied as needed to separate the same from the female connector **38** by a distance which is suited to accommodate the width of the surfboard with which the separator **10** is to be used.

As best seen in FIG. **3**, in attaching each separator **10** to the first surfboard **12**, the strap **24** of the separator **10** is wrapped about the width **W** of the first surfboard **12** such that the pads **30** thereof are each abutted against the lower surface **18** of the first surfboard **12**. Thereafter, the female and male connectors **38**, **40** of the attachment assembly **36** of the separator **10** are operatively coupled to each other. The strap **24** is then cinched or tightened about the first surfboard **12** by grasping a portion of the strap **24** adjacent the second end **28** in one hand of the user and pulling the same as needed to effectively decrease the length of the strap **24** between the male and female connectors **40**, **38**. During the cinching of the strap **24** in the aforementioned manner, the separator **10** may be caused to rotate upon the surfboard **12**, thus altering the desired orientation of the pads **30** of separator **10** upon the lower surface **18**. To prevent such undesirable rotation, the strap **24** preferably is formed to define a loop **44** which is oriented so as to extend between the pads **30**. The loop **44** aids the user in cinching the strap **24** around the first surfboard **12**. In this regard, the user is able to insert a thumb or other finger from one hand into the loop **44**, while at the same time pulling the second end **28** of the strap **24** with the other hand. The force exerted against the strap **24** by the thumb of the user within the loop **44** resists the undesirable rotation of the separator **10** relative to the first surfboard **12** which could otherwise occur when the second end **28** of the strap **24** is pulled to facilitate the tightening or cinching of the strap **24** about the first surfboard **12**.

Each surfboard separator **10** further preferably comprises an attachment assembly guard **42** which is connected to the strap **24**. The guard **42** comprises an elongate strip or flap of material which is attached to the strap **24** and oriented thereon so as to be disposed between the interconnected female and male connectors **38**, **40** of the attachment assembly **36** and the lower surface **18** of the first surfboard **12** in the manner also best shown in FIG. **3**. As such, the guard **42** prevents the female and male connectors **38**, **40**, which are each typically fabricated from a rigid plastic material, from rubbing against or otherwise scratching the lower surface **18** of the first surfboard **12**. It is contemplated that the flap of material used to form the guard **42** will be fabricated from the same material used to fabricate the strap **24**, one such exemplary material being woven nylon.

Though not shown, it is contemplated that in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention, the above-described strap **24** may be substituted with a continuous elastomeric band. As will be recognized, such elastomeric band will not include separate first and second ends, or the above-

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described attachment assembly **36** used in conjunctions with the strap **24**. Rather, the elastomeric band would be configured such that the same may be expanded, and thereafter elastically constricted about the width **W** of the first surfboard **12** once advanced thereover.

In using the surfboard separator **10** of the present invention, as indicated above, such usage preferably involves the cooperative engagement of a pair of the separators **10** to the first surfboard **12** in spaced relation to each other and in the manner described above. Once a pair of the separators **10** is attached to the first surfboard **12**, such first surfboard **12** is placed upon the top of the vehicle for transport to the surfing destination. The vehicle preferably includes a roof rack **45** upon which the first surfboard **12** having the separators **10** operatively coupled thereto is placed. Roof racks **45** as known in the art typically include a pair of brackets **46** which are separated by a first distance **D** as shown in FIG. **1**. Though not necessarily required, the separators **10** are preferably secured to the first surfboard **12** so as to be separated from each other by a distance roughly equal to the distance **D** separating the brackets **46** of the roof rack **45** from each other. As will be recognized, it is the upper surface **16** of the first surfboard **12** that is placed directly upon the brackets **46** of the roof rack **45**, such that the lower surface **18** of the first surfboard **12** and pads **30** of the separators **10** abutted thereagainst are upwardly presented or facing.

Thereafter, the second surfboard **14** is stacked upon the underlying first surfboard **12** such that the upper surface **16** of the second surfboard **14** is brought into direct, abutting engagement to the pads **30** of the separators **10** attached to the lower first surfboard **12** of the stack. As a result, the pads **30** of the separators **10** are sandwiched between the first and second surfboards **12**, **14**. After the surfboards **12**, **14** are stacked on each other, it is contemplated that such stacked surfboards **12**, **14** will further be secured to the roof rack **45** through the use of tie downs **48** such as bungee cords, ropes, straps, ratcheting straps, and the like. The use of such tie downs **48** typically causes compressive pressure to be exerted against the pads **30** between the first and second surfboards **12**, **14** as results in some measure of compression thereof. Such compression of the pads **30** provides the advantage of facilitating a shock absorbing effect during the transport of the stacked surfboards **12**, **14**. If the third surfboard **15** is to be included in the stack, the same process described above in relation to the outfitting of the first surfboard **12** with a pair of the separators **10** is completed in relation to the second surfboard **14**, i.e., the second surfboard **14** is outfitted with a pair of separators **10** prior to the stacking thereof upon the first surfboard **12**. Thereafter, the third surfboard **15** may be stacked upon the second surfboard **14** in the same manner in which the second surfboard **14** is stacked upon the first surfboard **12**.

It is understood that many surfers transport their surfboards in a bag that fits around the surfboards. Sometimes, each surfboard is placed in a separate bag, and other times, multiple surfboards are placed in one bag. It is contemplated that the present invention may be used in conjunction with such bags. In the case of each surfboard being placed in a separate bag, the separators **10** may be attached to the outside of the bag containing the first surfboard **12**. Once attached, the bag containing the second surfboard **14** can be placed on top of the separators **10**. In the case of one bag containing multiple surfboards, the separators **10** may be placed on the first surfboard **12** before it is placed in the bag. After the first surfboard **12** is placed in the bag, the second surfboard **14** may be placed in the bag so that the pads **30** on the separators **10** are disposed between the first and second surfboards **12**, **14** within the

common bag. Once both surfboards **12**, **14** are disposed within the bag, the bag may be sealed, and then secured to the roof rack **45**.

The above description is given by way of example, and not limitation. Given the above disclosure, one skilled in the art could devise variations that are within the scope and spirit of the invention disclosed herein. Further, the various features of the embodiments disclosed herein can be used alone, or in varying combinations with each other and are not intended to be limited to the specific combination described herein. Thus, the scope of the claims is not to be limited by the illustrated embodiments.

What is claimed is:

1. A surfboard separator attachable to a first surfboard, the separator being operative to separate and create a padded interface between the first surfboard and a second surfboard stacked upon the first surfboard when attached to the first surfboard, the separator comprising:

an elongate strap having opposed first and second ends; at least one pad slidably mounted to the strap, the pad being positionable against the first surfboard when the separator is connected thereto; and

an attachment assembly connected to the strap and operative to maintain the strap in looped engagement about the first surfboard;

the pad being positionable between the first and second surfboards when the second surfboard is stacked upon the first surfboard subsequent to the attachment of the separator to the first surfboard.

2. The separator of claim **1** wherein the attachment assembly comprises:

a first connector attached to the strap adjacent the first end thereof; and

a second connector attached to the strap between the first and second ends thereof, the second connector being releasably attachable to the first connector;

at least one of the first and second connectors being movably mounted to the strap to allow for the selective adjustment in a length of the strap between the first and second connectors.

3. The separator of claim **2** wherein the first connector is permanently attached to the first end of the strap and the second connector is adjustably mounted thereto.

4. The separator of claim **3** wherein the first connector is a female connector and the second connector is a male connector.

5. The separator of claim **1** further comprising an attachment assembly guard connected to the strap, the attachment assembly guard being disposed between the attachment assembly and the first surfboard when the separator is connected thereto.

6. The separator of claim **1** wherein the strap further defines a loop which is sized and configured to accommodate a finger of a user's hand to assist the user in cinching the strap to the first surfboard.

7. The separator of claim **1** wherein the at least one pad is fabricated of a resilient, foam-like material.

8. The separator of claim **1** wherein the at least one pad comprises first and second pad sections adhesively secured to each other and having a portion of the strap extending therebetween.

9. The separator of claim **1** comprising a pair of pads slidably mounted to the strap in spaced relation to each other.

10. The separator of claim **9** wherein the strap further defines a loop which is disposed between the pads and is sized and configured to accommodate a finger of a user's hand to assist the user in cinching the strap to the first surfboard.

11. The separator of claim **9** wherein each of the pads comprises first and second pad sections adhesively secured to each other and having a portion of the strap extending therebetween.

12. The separator of claim **1** wherein the strap is fabricated from woven nylon.

13. A surfboard separator, comprising:

an elongate strap having opposed first and second ends; at least two pads slidably mounted to the strap in spaced relation to each other, each of the pads being positionable against a surfboard when the separator is connected thereto;

an attachment assembly connected to the strap and operative to maintain the strap in looped engagement about the surfboard; and

an attachment assembly guard connected to the strap, the attachment assembly guard being disposed between the attachment assembly and the surfboard when the separator is connected thereto.

14. The separator of claim **13** wherein the strap further defines a loop which is disposed between the pads and is sized and configured to accommodate a finger of a user's hand to assist the user in cinching the strap to the surfboard.

15. The separator of claim **13** wherein each of the pads comprises first and second pad sections adhesively secured to each other and having a portion of the strap extending therebetween.

16. The separator of claim **13** wherein the attachment assembly comprises:

a first connector attached to the strap adjacent the first end thereof; and

a second connector attached to the strap between the first and second ends thereof, the second connector being releasably attachable to the first connector;

at least one of the first and second connectors being movably mounted to the strap to allow for the selective adjustment in a length of the strap between the first and second connectors.

17. A surfboard separator attachable to a first surfboard, the separator being operative to separate and create a padded interface between the first surfboard and a second surfboard stacked upon the first surfboard when attached to the first surfboard, the separator comprising:

an elongate strap having opposed first and second ends; at least a pair of pads connected to the strap in spaced relation to each other, the pads being positionable against the first surfboard when the separator is connected thereto; and

an attachment assembly connected to the strap and operative to maintain the strap in looped engagement about the first surfboard;

the pads being positionable between the first and second surfboards when the second surfboard is stacked upon the first surfboard subsequent to the attachment of the separator to the first surfboard.

18. The separator of claim **17** wherein each of the pads is slidably mounted to the strap.

19. The separator of claim **18** wherein each of the pads comprises first and second pad sections adhesively secured to each other and having a portion of the strap extending therebetween.

20. The separator of claim **17** wherein each of the pads comprises first and second pad sections adhesively secured to each other and having a portion of the strap extending therebetween.